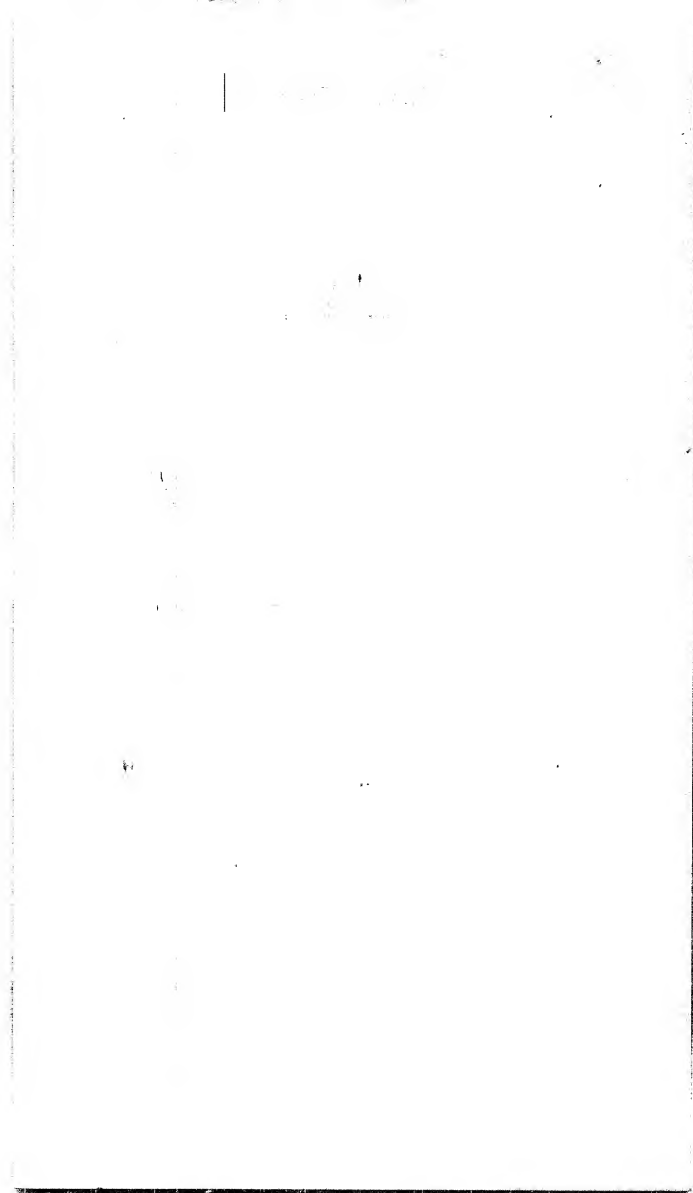


doorway of an unfinished building. "The water-carrier audibly remarked: 'Ah, mon ami, you don't know when you are well off.' The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a block of granite fell with a crash and killed him. Even then Sardou was superstitious, and, believing from this accident that he had yet room to hope, went home, and again took up his pen."

The result was a number of plays, written in various styles, and showing the influence of numerous masters. One of these, "La Reine Ulfra," he offered to Rachel, who refused it. However, Mlle Desfossés, the rival of the celebrated tragédienne, accepted the play, and failed dismally. The same fate awaited the second play, "La Taverne des Etudiants," which was performed at the Odéon in 1854. Then followed a period of disappointment: plays were peddled from theatre to theatre, and collaborators proved treacherous. But three years later he met the woman who became his wife in 1858. She had the good fortune to be a personal friend of the famous Mlle Déjazet.

Through Déjazet the young dramatist achieved his first success: "Les Premières Armes de Figaro" was produced at Déjazet's theatre in 1859. As yet





VICTORIEN SARDOU

PATRIE !

An Historical Drama in Five Acts
(Eight Scenes)

BY
VICTORIEN SARDOU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
BARRETT H. CLARK



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1915

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TO
CLAYTON HAMILTON
WITH THE GRATITUDE OF THE TRANSLATOR

C.I.T.

INTRODUCTION

Sardou is probably the oftenest referred to and least read of any dramatist of modern times. His name, together with the clever noun invented by Bernard Shaw, is constantly used as a term of reproach; the phrase "well-made play" is usually employed in a derogatory sense, as if a well-constructed play were something to be avoided. This state of affairs would not be so regrettable were it not that the plays of Sardou and his master Scribe are, with very few exceptions, inaccessible to English readers. Even Shaw based some of his most mordant and damning remarks about "Sardoodledom" upon English adaptations, and confesses that he never read "Fédora" in the original. "Gismonda," the other play he saw at the same time with the English version of "Fédora," has never been published in French. When a critic of Shaw's standing says, "Of course I was not altogether new to it, since I had seen 'Diplomacy Dora,' and 'Théodora,' and 'La Toscadora,' and the other machine dolls from the same

firm," he stands convicted of arguing from insufficient premises, for "Diplomacy" is an adaptation, while "Théodora," like "Gismonda," is as yet in manuscript. "La Tosca" was not published until some years after the appearance of Shaw's article.

If Sardou is to be justly estimated, he must be read, and if critics are to link the names of Sardou and Scribe together as nefarious purveyors of "well-made plays," they should at least not do so on the authority of former critics, many of whom have either not read the plays of the dramatists in question, or have only a superficial acquaintance with their works in the original.

The present translation of "Patrie!" is so far as I am aware the first Sardou play in English which follows the original text line for line. There are numerous adaptations, to some of which the name of the author is added, but far oftener bearing only the name of the adapter. It is, therefore, with the hope that this much-maligned dramatist may be sympathetically, or at least intelligently, read and calmly judged that this famous play has been included in "The Drama League Series."

Victorien Sardou was born in Paris on September 7, 1831. His early years were spent in the neigh-

borhood of the Faubourg St. Antoine, not far from the Place de la Bastille. He was educated at the College Henri IV, from which he was graduated in 1852, after a career which was in no manner of speaking brilliant. The youth had been an interested spectator of the stormy days of '48, and it is beyond doubt that these early impressions were all carefully noted and used in later years. After his graduation he wished to enter the field of literature, for which he had previously shown some predilection, but his practical-minded father insisted upon a more lucrative pursuit. The young man chose medicine. After a perfunctorily attended course of study at the hospital, Sardou was left alone in Paris, as his father, under the stress of financial difficulties, left the north for his native home in the Midi. Victorien then led the life of poor students, sharing his attic, trying to write, and gaining an insight into the seamy side of the "Vie de Bohème." The melodramatic story is told* that Sardou was walking the quays one night, bent on suicide, and met a water-carrier standing in the

* In Jerome A. Hart's "Sardou and the Sardou Plays" (Lippincott), the most complete and exhaustive study of Sardou which has yet appeared.